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ABSTRACT

A six-activity inquiry lesson (constructed to follow the "social inquiry" teaching model) provided students in two 11th-grade English classes with practice in theory building through data gathering and writing activities. Social inquiry has six instructional stages: students (1) are presented with a puzzling situation; (2) in small groups develop hypotheses to assist them in solving the problem; (3) define their hypotheses; (4) clarify their tasks; (5) gather data; and ultimately (6) propose a solution. The lesson plan presented to the students gives detailed instructions for activities which follow the six stages of the social inquiry model, and which involve the research of professor of anthropology (and amateur folklorist) Bedrois Klogapian concerning the possible contact among three now extinct tribes in the Central California Valley. (RS)

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FOLKLORE AS A DATA BASE FOR CRITICAL THINKING AND CRITICAL WRITING

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FOLKLORE AS A DATA BASE FOR CRITICAL WRITING AND CRITICAL THINKING

What follows is a six-activity inquiry lesson I taught recently in two eleventh grade classes at a local school. My purpose was to provide students with practice in theory building through data gathering and writing activities. The lesson was constructed to follow the teaching model called Social Inquiry, first developed by Byron Massialas and Benjamin Cox in their 1966 book Inquiry in the Social Studies (New York: McGraw Hill) and later adapted in Bruce Joyce and Martha Weil's Models of Teaching (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall). Social Inquiry is a teaching strategy that has six instructional stages: Students (1) are presented with a puzzling situation, (2) in small groups develop hypotheses to assist them in solving the problem, (3) define their hypotheses, (4) clarify their tasks, (5) gather data, and ultimately (6) propose a solution. I frequently attempt to model Social Inquiry in its pristine format within my preservice courses. However, the opportunity to teach a Social Inquiry lesson with actual high school students was too challenging to turn down without losing my own credibility.

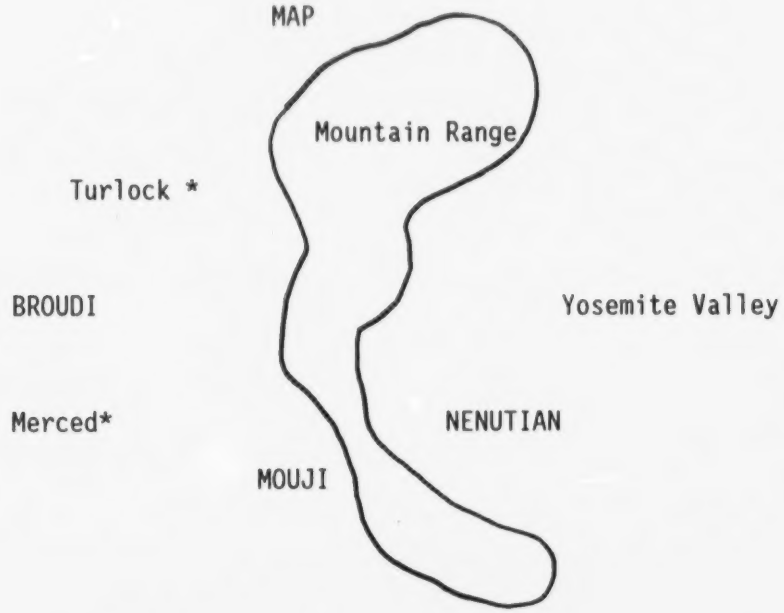
Rather than moving coldly and directly into social inquiry with two large classes of unfamiliar high school students, I preceded the lesson with several ice-breakers, warm-up activities that demonstrate how variations in language and folktales are the result of oral tradition (e.g., whispering a story from person to person then comparing the first with the last version). The six activities which follow reflect the six stages in the Social Inquiry model developed by Massialas and Cox.

Activity 1: Presenting a Puzzling Situation to the Students

SITUATION: Bedrois Klogapian, professor of anthropology at X University, had devoted his life to studying the now extinct Mouji Indians, who lived in

foothills of the Central California Valley east of Merced. Although Klogapian was only an amateur folklorist, he was studying the folktales of the Mouji at the time of his death, particularly trying to determine whether the Mouji had ever contacted the Nenutian tribe, also extinct, who had inhabited Yosemite Valley (see MAP). If the two tribes had made contact, Klogapian argued, the tribe making the contact would be assumed to have the greater level of technological development to have crossed the high mountain range separating the two tribes. The only existing evidence of such contact is a folktale by the Mouji "Sister of the Spirit," which bears a close resemblance to a recently translated Nenutian tale "Wind and the Mountain." Complicating the problem is the existence of a third tale "The Fires of Winter," a folktale from the Broudi tribe, also extinct, who had lived in the plains near what is now Turlock, California. Klogapian's dilemma was to determine whether the three tales were variants of one another (see TALES). If the Mouji tale is closer in content and structure to the Broudi tale than to the Nenutian tale, Klogapian's theory might be questioned. The problem has not yet been solved because of Klogapian's death.

MAP



Activity 2: Developing Hypotheses

INSTRUCTIONS: You will be divided into four problem-solving discussion groups. Each group will be an anthropological research time from a major research university in the United States. Each group will have a specific task to perform. Once you are in groups, elect one person to take notes and another person to coordinate the discussion. In addition, one person from each group should be prepared to give a brief summary of what the group has found out. Before you begin to work, establish a hypothesis, a statement that you will try to prove. Notice that a hypothesis has been suggested for each group. You do not have to use the stated hypothesis; rather, you can develop your own, if you wish.

1

Group One (The Berkeley Research Team) : Professor Klogapian had a theory that the Mouji and the Nenutians had come in physical contact with one another. Find evidence in the three folktales that would support his theory. Suggested Hypothesis: Data from three folktales suggest that the Mouji and the Nenutians had come in contact with one another.

2

Group Two (The University of Chicago Research Team): Professor Klogapian had a theory that the Mouji and the Nenutians had come in physical contact with one another. Find evidence in the three folktales that would refute his theory. Suggested Hypothesis: Data from three folktales suggest that the Mouji and the Nenutians did not come in contact with one another.

3

Group Three (The Harvard Research Team): What is the significance of the Broudi tribe in determining whether the Mouji and the Nenutians (also known as the Nanutians) had ever come in contact with one another? In answering this

question, try to make connections (1) between the Broudi tale and the Mouji tale and (2) between the Broudi tale and the Nenutian tale.

Suggested Hypothesis: The Broudi tale provides sufficient evidence to determine whether the Mouji and the Nenutian tribes had ever made contact.

4

Group Four (The Princeton Research Team): Develop a theory (explanation) for how the three tribes might have made contact with one another. Remember that your theory must be supported by evidence from the three folktales.

Suggested Hypothesis: Evidence from three folktales supports (does not support) any relationship among the Mouji, the Nenutians, and the Broudi.

Activity 3: Defining and Clarifying the Hypotheses

INSTRUCTIONS: By now you have (1) reviewed the puzzling situation, (2) examined the map and read the three tales, and (3) met in research teams to develop a hypothesis. Now, take a close look at your hypothesis and answer the following questions:

1. Underline the key or main words in your hypothesis: e.g.,

   Data from three folktales suggest that the Mouji and the Nenutians came in contact with one another.

2. As a group, agree on what each of the key or main words means:

   data — Information from the three folktales, in the form of direct quotations

   three folktales — "Sister of the Spirit"
   "Wind and the Mountain"
   "The Fires of Winter"

   Mouji — Tribe designated on the map as living south of Merced

and West of the mountains

Nenutians Tribe designated on the map as living east of the mountains

came in contact point in history at which at least one member of one tribe made face-to-face contact with at least one member of another tribe.

Activity 4: Examining the Hypothesis Closely

INSTRUCTIONS: Now that you have defined all of the terms in your hypothesis, you probably have a good idea about what you are going to do. However, before you start gathering evidence, you need to take another look at your hypothesis and see if it is a good one or whether you want to revise it. Here are some questions you might want to answer as a group:

1. What are you assuming or taking for granted about the map and about the tales?
2. Will your search uncover all of the truth, none of the truth, or part of the truth?
3. Now that you have answered 1 and 2, do you want to change the language of your hypothesis?

Activity 5: Gathering the Data

Part A

INSTRUCTIONS; Now reread the tales, either individually or in your small groups, and fill in the following grid with important details from each of the three tales:

Element	Mouji Tale	Nenutian Tale	Broudi Tale
Lead. Char. Name and Description			
The Quest			
Conflict			
Elements of Nature Used in Tale			
Supernatural Happenings			
Symbols, etc.			

Outcome			
Your Own Category			

Part B

INSTRUCTIONS: Your chart contains information on seven elements of the three folktales, with room for you to add an additional element if you wish. The chart shows you the basic similarities and differences that exist among the three tales. Now that you have filled in the data sheet on the three folktales, answer the following questions that will help you deal with the problem you are to solve. You will probably want to write down the answers to these questions for use later. Although all groups should answer all questions, I have indicated which questions are most important to the tasks assigned to specific groups:

1. What elements are the same in all three folktales? (Groups 1,3,4)
2. What are the similarities between the Mouji folktale and the Nenutian folktale that are not shared by the Broudi folktale? (Groups 1, 3)
3. What are the similarities between the Mouji folktale and the Broudi folktale that are not shared by the Nenutian folktale? (Groups 3, 4)
4. What are the similarities between the Broudi folktale and the Nenutian folktale that are not shared by the Mouji folktale? (Groups 2, 3, 4)
6. What elements do none of the folktales share? (Groups 2, 3, 4)
7. Think back to the activity that we did earlier in which you whispered the same story to one another from one end of the room to the other. What

happened to the story the "older" it got? Using that activity as a basis? which of the three tales was the oldest? Which was the most recent? (Groups 1, 2, 3, 4)

Activity 6: Proposing a Solution

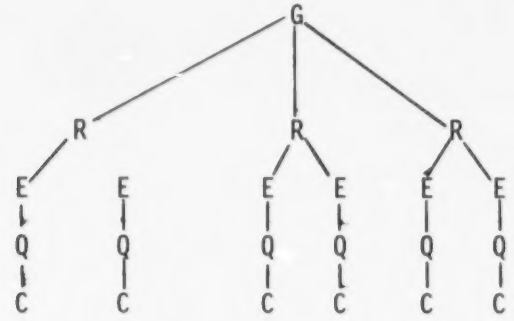
INSTRUCTIONS: You are going to write a group paper that relates to the task your group has been given. In writing this paper you are going to be dealing with five kinds of sentences or statements:

1. Generalization (G). You will use this kind of statement when you explain what your theory is, declare what stand you are going to take on an issue, or come to a conclusion: e.g., "Evidence from three folktales clearly supports Bedrois' Klogapian's theory that the Mouji and Nenutians had come in contact with one another."
2. Reason (R). You will use this kind of statement when you are explaining why you think the way you do: e.g., There are more similarities than differences between the Mouji tale and the Nenutian tale."
3. Example or Illustration (E). You use this kind of statement when you supply specific information from the tales: e.g., "The Nenutian tale was a story within a story; whereas the other two tales were simple stories."

4. Direct or Indirect Quotation (Q). You use this kind of statement when you want to explain in greater detail the example you have given. When you use a direct quotation you use the author's own words: e.g.,"According to the Nenutian tale, 'Nunu had killed the white deer for food and the white deer was not to be killed.'" When you use an indirect quotation, you put what the author has said into your own words: e.g., "According to the story, Nunu had killed the forbidden deer."

5. Clarification (C). Use this kind of statement when you try to show how the example you have given relates to a generalization or a reason: e.g., "The killing of the deer, then, occurs only on the one tale, which is evidence to suggest that the Broudi and Mouji tale are not closely related.

What follows is an outline or graphic organizer that may show you how the five kinds of statements fit together:



Using the above as a graphic organizer, your group paper might be organized like this:

Paragraph	Substance
1	G
2	E Q C E Q C
3	E Q C E Q C
4	E Q C E Q C
5	G

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to show how a model of teaching, specifically, social inquiry, can be adapted to the English classroom to teach critical thinking and critical writing. All I can say is that I have taught this lesson to high school students, and it works!